

Message Text

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71

ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0433

INFO AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

CINCSO CZ

CINCLANT FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 1903

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, DR

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN ENTERS FINAL WEEK

REF : SD-1808

1. SUMMARY. IN ITS FINAL WEEK, THE DOMINICAN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN STILL LACKS DEFINITION. AMID CHARGES OF ELECTORAL FRAUD, OPPOSITION CANDIDATES ARE THREATENING TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTIONS. BALAGUER CONTINUES HIS STRENUOUS ONE-MAN CAMPAIGN WITH APPARENTLY MOUNTING SUCCESS WHILE THE SANTIAGO ACCORD CANDIDATES ALSO APPEAR INCREASINGLY BULLISH WITH THEIR ELECTION PROSPECTS. VIOLENCE AND PUBLIC TENSIONS REMAIN AT A RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL, AIDED IN PART BY OPPOSITION EFFORTS TO CREATE AN IMAGE OF POLITICAL MATURITY AND RESPONSIBILITY. ALTHOUGH CERTAIN OFFICIAL SECTORS ARE EVINCING SOME SIGNS OF DISCOURAGEMENT WITH THE APPARENT POPULAR ENTHUSIASM FOR THE OPPOSITION, MOST SEEM CONFIDENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPECTED LAST MINUTE EFFORTS WILL SUCCESSFULLY CARRY THE ELECTIONS FOR BALAGUER AND THE MAJORITY OF HIS SUPPORTERS. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH THE DOMINICAN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN ENTERING ITS
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FINAL WEEK, THE OUTCOME OF THE MAY 16 ELECTIONS REMAINS

UNCLEAR AS A NUMBER OF BASIC QUESTIONS ARE STILL UN-ANSWERED. A MAJOR CONTROVERSY HAS ARISEN OVER A REPORTED REFORMIST PARTY REQUEST TO THE CENTRAL ELECTORAL BOARD (JCE) TO PERMIT VOTERS TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS AT ANY POLLING BOOTH RATHER THAN ONLY AT THAT BOOTH WHERE THEY ARE CURRENTLY REGISTERED. ON MAY 5, NATIONAL YOUTH MOVEMENT (MJN) PRESIDENT GOMEZ BERGES PUBLICLY ADVOCATED THIS POSITION, ARGUING THAT AS MANY AS 400,000 DOMINICANS WILL NOT VOTE BECAUSE OF THE CONFUSION AND INCONVENIENCE CAUSED BY THE PRESENT SYSTEM. THE OPPOSITION, HOWEVER, HAS THREATENED TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTION IF THE SYSTEM IS CHANGED, ALLEGING THAT THE REFORMIST PROPOSAL WOULD FACILITATE A MASSIVE PRO-GOVERNMENT FRAUD BY ENCOURAGING MULTIPLE VOTING. THE JCE IS REPORTEDLY STUDYING BOTH POSITIONS AND HAS NOT YET ANNOUNCED ITS DECISION IN THIS REGARD.

3. MEANWHILE, THE RACE FOR PRESIDENT IS NARROWING. MCN CANDIDATE JAIME MANUEL FERNANDEZ WITHDREW HIS HAT FROM THE RING THIS WEEK AND URGED HIS SUPPORTERS TO VOTE ACCORDING TO THE DICTATES OF THEIR CONSCIENCE. ANOTHER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, THE PDP'S LAJARA BURGOS, ANNOUNCED HIS PARTY'S DECISION TO BOYCOTT THE ELECTIONS. THERE IS ALSO CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION THAT MIDA PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE FRANCISCO AUGUSTO LORA MAY DROP OUT OF THE RUNNING AT THE LAST MOMENT, INFLUENCED BY THE EVIDENT LACK OF PUBLIC ENTHUSIASM FOR HIS CANDIDACY.

4. WITHIN THE FOUR-PARTY SANTIAGO ACCORD, THE MARXIST-LENINIST DOMINICAN POPULAR MOVEMENT (MPD) CONTINUES TO ADVOCATE ELECTORAL ABSTENTION AND REPORTEDLY MAY EVEN WITHDRAW FROM THE ACCORD BECAUSE OF THE FAILURE OF ITS CAMPAIGN TO FORCE THE GODR TO RELEASE IMPRISONED MPD LEADERS. ACCORDING TO SEVERAL OPPOSITION SOURCES, HOWEVER, MPD WITHDRAWAL FROM THE ACCORD WOULD SERVE TO STRENGTHEN GUZMAN'S ELECTORAL POSITION BECAUSE, THEY CLAIM, MANY DOMINICANS WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE VOTE FOR HIM ARE CONCERNED OVER POSSIBLE LEFTIST INFLUENCE IN AN MPD-SUPPORTED GOVERNMENT. AN MPD DECISION TO LEAVE THE ACCORD, THEY ARGUE, WOULD TEND TO ALLEVIATE THESE FEARS AND ENHANCE GUZMAN'S

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IMAGE AMONG MORE CONSERVATIVE VOTERS.

5. AS FOR THE CAMPAIGN ITSELF, PRESIDENT BALAGUER CONTINUES HIS GRUELING SCHEDULE OF EXTENDED DAILY TRIPS INTO THE INTERIOR TO OBTAIN MAXIMUM POLITICAL EXPOSURE TO THE RURAL MASSES. MANY BALAGUER SUPPORTERS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN HEARTENED BY THE FAVORABLE POLITICAL IMPACT THESE VISITS HAVE HAD ON THE RURAL VOTERS. COUPLED WITH THESE SORTIES,

BALAGUER HAS BEEN DELIVERING A DAILY SERIES OF NATIONWIDE RADIO AND TELEVISION ADDRESSES AIMED AT SPECIFIC SECTORS OF DOMINICAN SOCIETY, E.G., YOUTH, WORKERS, FARMERS, ETC. A MAJOR GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN THEME HAS BEEN THE PORTRAYAL OF BALAGUER AS THE CANDIDATE OF PEACE, PREDICTING THE RETURN OF CHAOS AND BLOODSHED (AND POSSIBLE A MILITARY COUP) SHOULD HE LOSE THE ELECTIONS. ACCORDING TO SOME SOURCES, INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE HAVE BEEN PROVOKED BY GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS TO CREATE A SENSE OF UNCERTAINTY AND FEAR AMONG THE ELECTORATE, WHOSE MEMORIES OF 1965 REMAIN VIVID. THE OPPOSITION APPARENTLY BELIEVES THAT PUBLIC DISORDERS AT THIS TIME WORK TO THE BENEFIT OF THE GODR. PERHAPS FOR THIS REASON, THEY HAVE BEEN WILLING TO NEGOTIATE POLITICAL TRUCES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, HAVE REPORTEDLY CALLED OFF A MAJOR RALLY SCHEDULED FOR MAY 12 IN THE CAPITAL, AND HAVE ATTEMPTED TO END A TAXI DRIVERS STRIKE IN THE CIBAO. IN ANY EVENT, THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE IN THE CAPITAL, ALTHOUGH INCREASINGLY CHARGED, STILL REMAINS RELATIVELY TRANQUIL DESPITE A HUNGER STRIKE BY A REPORTED 160 SELF-STYLED "POLITICAL PRISONERS" AND A NUMBER OF PEACEFUL OCCUPATIONS OF CHURCHES IN THE CAPITAL AND THE CIBAO ON THEIR BEHALF. SIGNIFICANTLY, NOT A SINGLE DEATH ATTRIBUTABLE TO POLITICAL MOTIVES WAS REGISTERED IN THE CAPITAL DURING THE PAST WEEK ALTHOUGH SEVERAL DEATHS WERE REPORTED IN THE TROUBLED CIBAO CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO DE MACORIS.

6. INTERESTINGLY, BALAGUER IS CARRYING HIS CAMPAIGN TO THE VOTERS VIRTUALLY UNAIDED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL BY ANY OTHER REFORMIST LEADERS AND/OR CANDIDATES. FOR ITS PART, THE FINANCIALLY-CONSTRAINED SANTIAGO ACCORD CLAIMS TO BE INCREASINGLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT AN ELECTORAL VICTORY, BUOYED BY THE NUMBERS AND APPARENT ENTHUSIASM OF DOMINICANS AT-

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TENDING ITS RALLIES, THE LATEST OF WHICH IN THE BALAGUER BASTION OF SANTIAGO ON MAY 5 ATTRACTED UPWARDS OF 50,000 PEOPLE.

7. IN THE FACE OF SUCH OPPOSITION OPTIMISM AND THE ACCUMULATING EVIDENCE OF DISCOURAGEMENT WITHIN THE GODR, THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT INTE
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